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A new lygosomine skink (Lacertilia: Scincidae: *Panaspis*) from Cameroon

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A new lygosomine skink (Lacertilia: Scincidae: *Panaspis*) from Cameroon. - A small skink from Mt. Kupe, Cameroon, is described as *Panaspis chriswildi* sp. n. It proves to be the third species of the *Lacertaspis* group within *Panaspis*, next to *P. reichenowii* and *P. rohdei*. This subgeneric assignment is corroborated by the ultrastructure of the scale surface.

Key-words: Lacertilia - Scincidae - *Panaspis (Lacertaspis) chriswildi* sp. n. - Cameroon.

INTRODUCTION

In 1995, a collection of skinks of the lygosomine genus *Panaspis* was kindly donated to the ZFMK by Christopher Wild, Loughborough/England, who had collected it, partly in association with Mr. Ulrich Hofer, Berne/Switzerland, on Mt. Kupe, Cameroon (see Wild 1993, 1994). This material, collected at different altitudes, contained representatives of three subgenera: *Panaspis* s. str., *Leptosiaphos* and *Lacertaspis* (sensu Perret 1975). Of the latter, both closely related species (Perret 1973) which form this subgenus, viz. *P. (L.) reichenowii* and *P. (L.) rohdei*, were represented, by ZFMK 59535–536 and ZFMK 59529–534 respectively. An additional specimen resembled *P. reichenowii* by the possession of two, big blackish parietal spots (which were considered to be diagnostic for this species), but differed strikingly by head and body proportions and scalation characters. After having compared this material with the respective holdings of the Muséum d'histoire naturelle, Genève (MHNG), and former acquisitons of the Museum A. Koenig, Bonn (ZFMK), the above-mentioned lizard is described here as:

Panaspis (Lacertaspis) chriswildi sp. n.

Diagnosis: A medium-sized species (total length less than 11 cm) of the *Lacertaspis* section of *Panaspis* (see Perret 1975, Perret & Wüest 1982), which differs from *P. (L.) reichenowii* by only slightly enlarged preanals, 26 scales around

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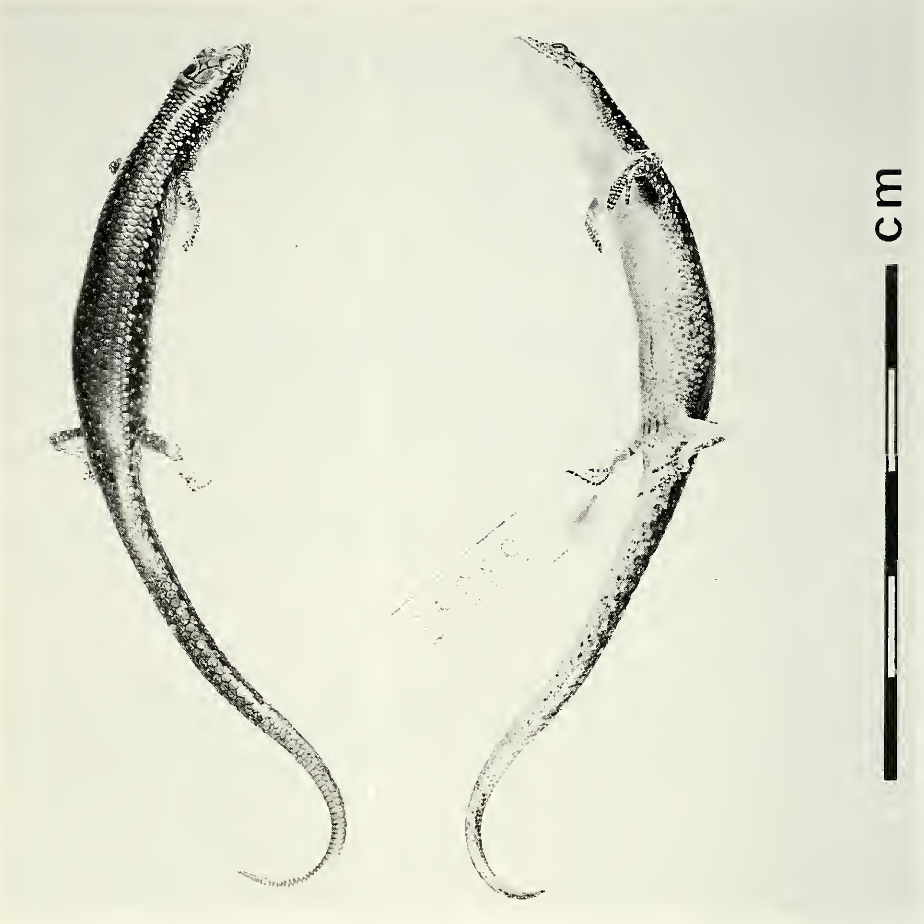

FIG. 1

Dorsal (left) and ventral (right) view of the holotype of *Panaspis (Lacertaspis) chriswildi* sp. n.

midbody, a less pointed snout, larger parietal spots and a triangular first loreal; it differs from *P. (L.) rohdei* by the smaller size, the presence of parietal spots and shorter limbs. It is distinguished from both species by 18–19 lamellae under the fourth toe and 2 pairs of enlarged nuchal scales.

Holotype: ZFMK 59537, ♀ (Fig. 1 et 2), Cameroon: Mt. Kupe, 1550 m a.s.l., C. Wild, 18.V.1994.

Head-body length 45 mm, tail length 58 mm + (regenerated). Habitus slender, lacertiform, tail round in cross section, not laterally compressed. Limbs well developed, pentadactyle, without web rudiments at the basis of the toes. Head stout with

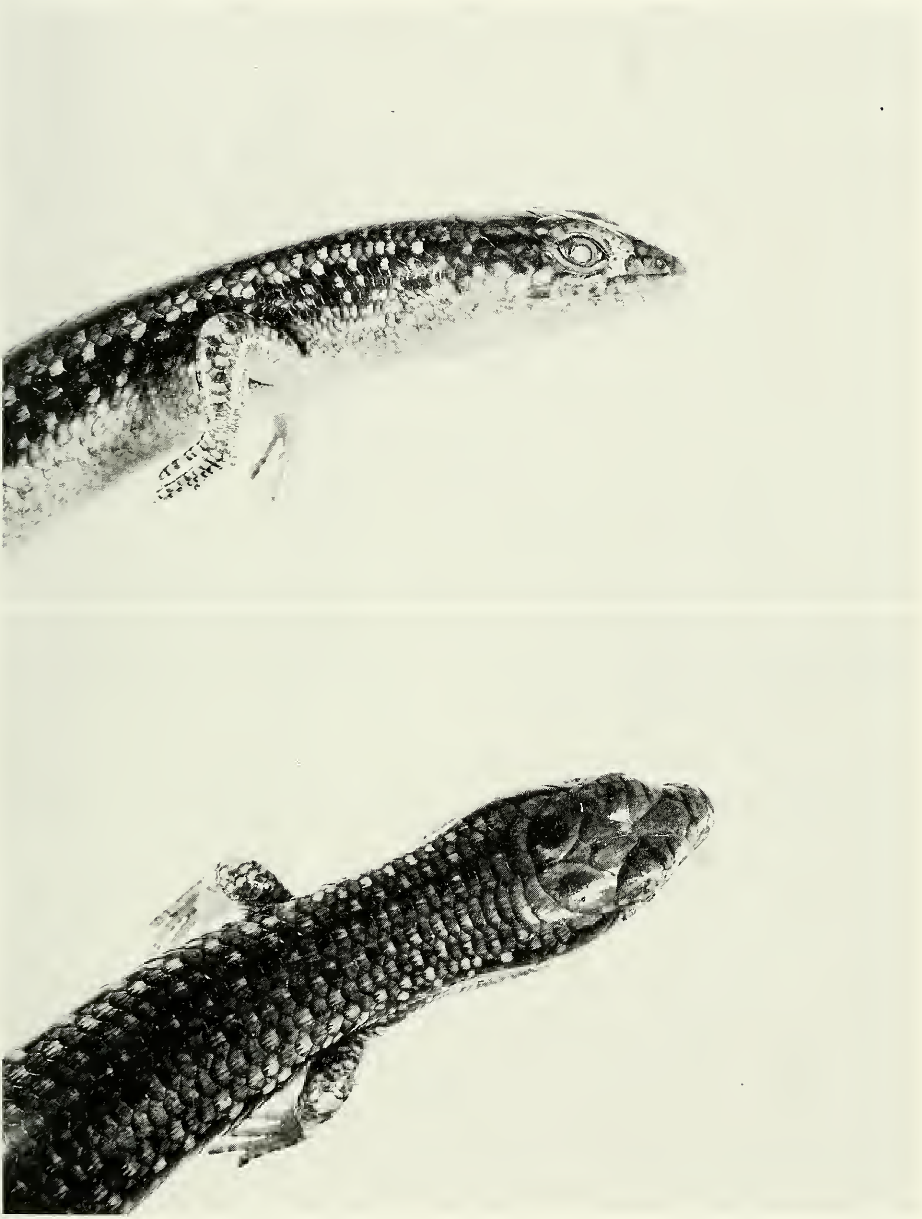

FIG. 2

Lateral (above) and dorsal (below) view of the forepart of the holotype of *P. (L.) chriswildi* sp. n. Note the black patches on the parietal shields.

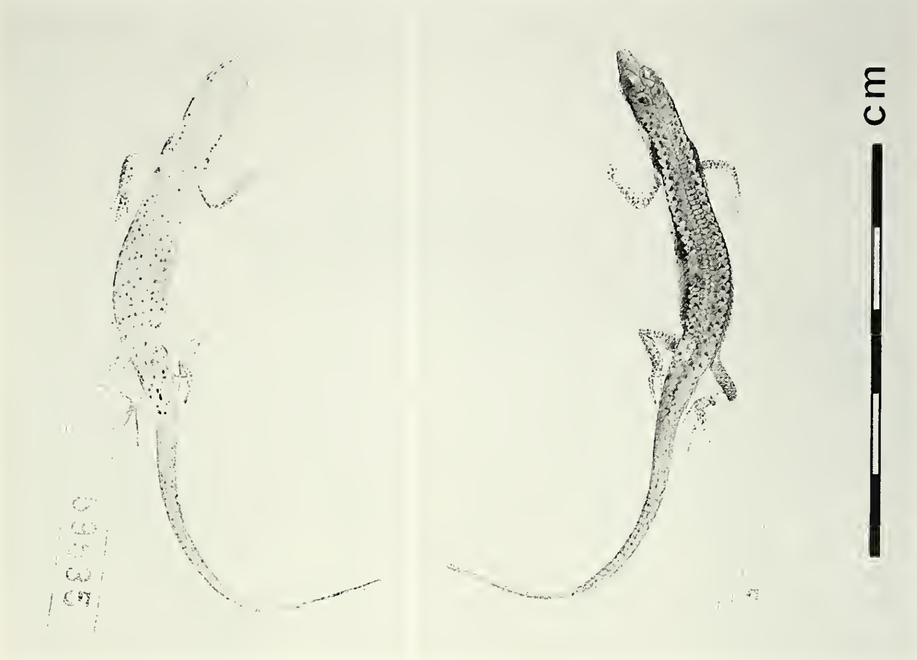

FIG. 3

Ventral (left) and dorsal (right) view of *P. (L.) reichenowii* (sympatric specimen from Mt. Kupe).

a pointed snout, not broader than midbody. Distance from tip of snout to anterior margin of eye a bit shorter than that from posterior eye margin to ear opening, which is small and roundish. Lower eyelid with a large, transparent disc. 4 supraoculars, 7 supraciliaries on either side. Rostral twice as wide as high. Internasal approximately one third wider than long. Nostril situated in an undivided nasal, smaller than ear opening. No supranasals. Prefrontals widely separated from each other. Two loreals, the first of them small, triangular, its tip pointing on the supralabials; second loreal approximately twice as large as the first one, pentagonal, anteriorly more or less pointed. Frontal longer than its distance from the tip of snout, roughly as broad as the parietals. Frontoparietals smaller than the frontal, ca. three times larger than the interparietal. Parietalia wider than long, each with a large blackish spot. Two pairs of enlarged nuchals. 5 supralabials on either side, the fourth one below the eye. 26 scales around midbody, smooth, but each with two brownish longitudinal heels which may be misinterpreted as keels. The two medial dorsal scale rows slightly enlarged, preanal scales nearly not enlarged. Subcaudals transversely widened. 18–19 subdigital lamellae under the fourth toe.

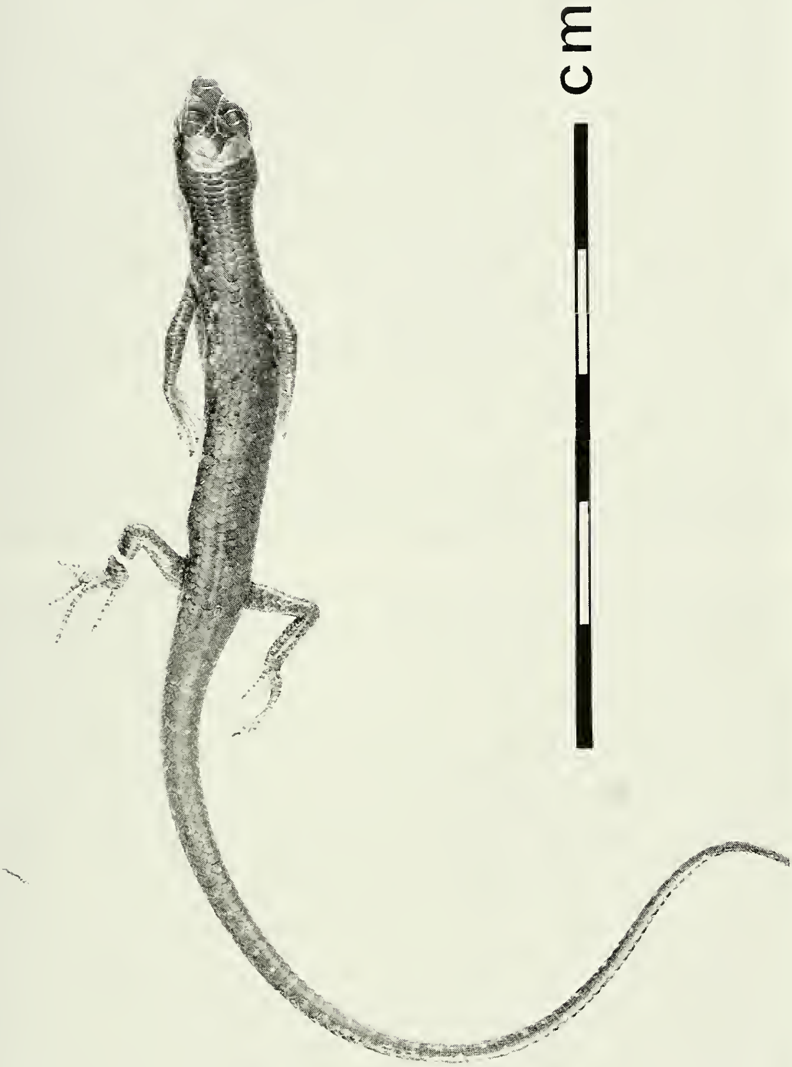

FIG. 4

Dorsal view of *P. (L.) rohdei* (sympatric specimen from Mt. Kupe).

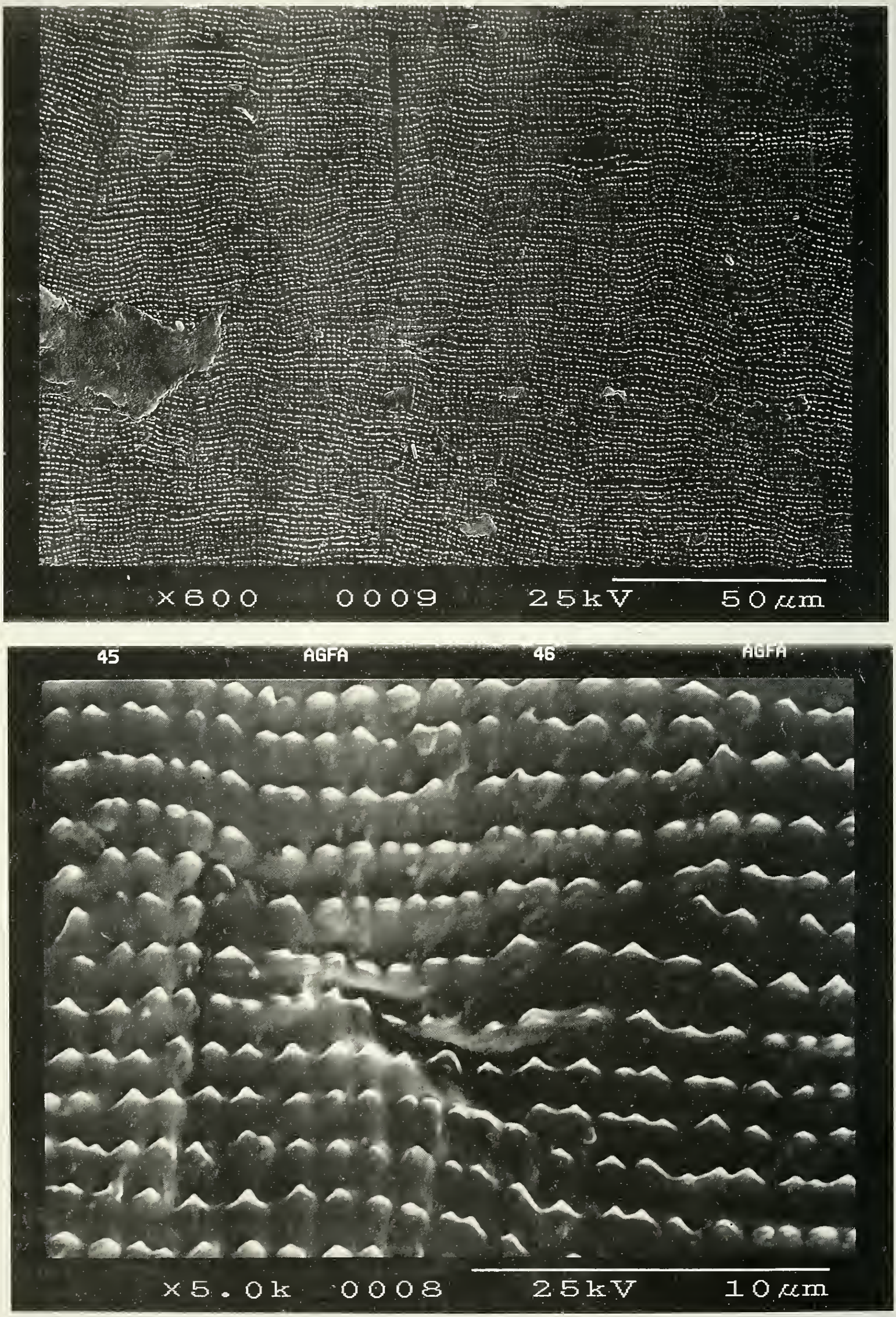

FIG. 5. Epidermal ultrastructure of *P. (L.) chriswildi* sp. n.

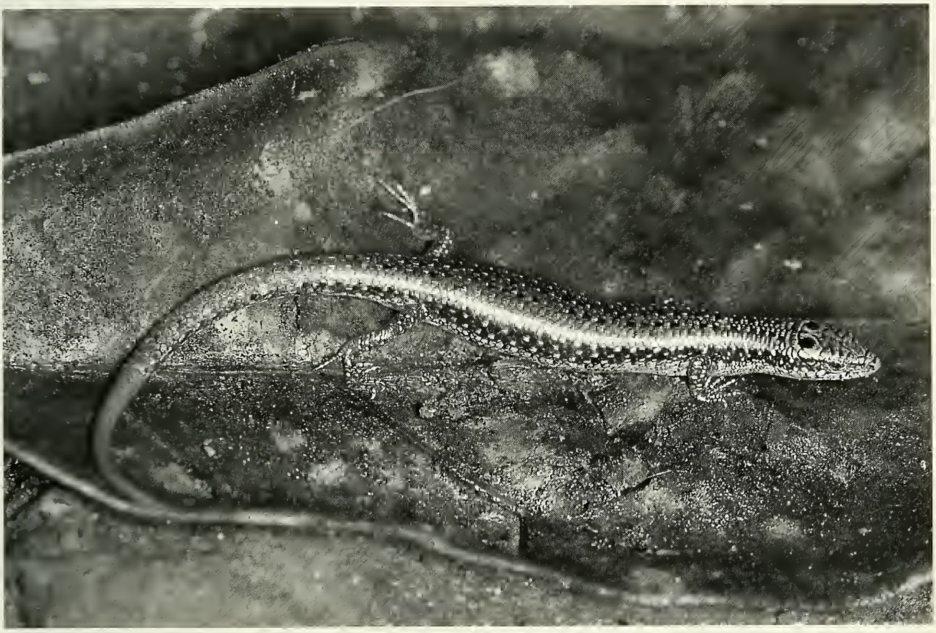

FIG. 6
Holotype of *P. (L.) chriswildi* sp. n. in life.

Upper parts brownish, with scarcely distributed light spots. A broad lateral band, running from behind the eye to the tail tip, also spotted with light dots, and becoming narrower from midbody hindwards. Between lower eyelid and tympanum a big, light fleck (Fig. 2). 3 dark transverse bars on the sutures of the supraocular scales. Upper side of limbs spotted with light dots. Fingers and toes with a marked brown-white annulation. Lower parts whitish, with dark spots mainly in the inguinal and cloacal region. The colouration of the living specimen is documented in fig. 6.

COMPARISONS

Although only one specimen of *P. chriswildi* sp. n. is available, it differs so clearly from its relatives that its specific distinctness is beyond any doubt. As stated in the diagnosis, its greatest affinities are with *P. reichenowii* (Fig. 3) and *P. rohdei* (Fig. 4), i.e. the two species forming the subgenus *Lacertaspis* Perret, 1975. According to PERRET (op. cit.: 11) *Lacertaspis* is among else characterized by a lacertiform habitus, a long tail, smooth, proximal caudilateral scales, robust, pentadactyl limbs overlapping when adpressed, and a great, visible, superficial tympanum. These characters are most likely connected with the habitat and habit, i.e. they could well be parallel adaptations rather than synapomorphies documenting a monophyletic group. The remaining — scalation — characters used as diagnostic occur also in the other subgenera (see PERRET 1975: table, p. 13).

In a later study, however, PERRET & WÜEST (1982) were able to detect an interesting new feature, viz. the ultrastructure of the scale epidermis. It turned out that the two species assigned to *Lacertaspis* showed a common pattern which distinguished them from all other *Panaspis* species studied. Although a polarity decision was neither made by PERRET & WÜEST (op. cit.) nor can it be done here, the common microdermatoglyph pattern of *P. (L.) reichenowii* and *P. (L.) rohdei* supports their joint delimitation from the subgenera *Panaspis* and *Leptosiaphos* better than the scalation and proportion differences.

P. chriswildi shows exactly the same pattern of epidermal ultrastructure (Fig. 5) as *P. reichenowii* and *P. rohdei* (see fig. 7 in PERRET & WÜEST, op. cit.: 277). We assign it therefore as the third species to *Lacertaspis*. The diagnosis of this subgenus has, however, to be modified accordingly: Habitus sepsinoïd to lacertiform; tympanum large, superficial to small, recessed; subarboricolous forms of lowland forest to terrestrial forms of (sub-)montane forest. This means that *Panaspis (Lacertaspis) chriswildi* bridges the morphological gap between *Lacertaspis* and *Leptosiaphos* as far as adaptive, habitat-related characters are concerned. Within *Lacertaspis*, *P. chriswildi* seems to be closer to *P. reichenowii* than to *P. rohdei*. The unique parietal flecks, not occurring in any other *Panaspis*, links it with the former, as does the ventral spotting. We regard therefore *P. reichenowii* to be the sister species of *P. chriswildi*. More material to be collected has to further clarify the systematic and ecological position of this remarkable new skink.

Etymology: The new species is dedicated to the collector of the holotype, Chris Wild, in order to acknowledge his continuous support and cooperation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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